

Testimony of Geno Ayala  
Connecticut School Counselor Association  
*In regards to*

**H.B. No. 5037- AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.**  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education  
Public Hearing - February 17, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and respected members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Geno Ayala and I am a school counselor at New Britain High School in New Britain, CT. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding HB5037- An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023. **Specifically, I am here today to testify about the importance of school counselors and the need to fund additional school counselors so that every student has access to a school counselor.**

School Counselors are vital to education and schools, these days more than ever. Recently we've experienced tragedy and violence at NBHS and it has left its mark! Students are struggling with mental health, including self-harm, and are at times acting out dangerously. The counselors we do have are overwhelmed, and have been for years. They need help! What good is a school counselor to a stressed out student if the counselor is super stressed themselves?!

Please fund more school counseling positions! Put yourself in our shoes. If it was your child attending a high school like NBHS, wouldn't you want the best care on a daily basis? I've been counseling for 18 years, and this year I'm running the NBHS Student Assistance Center for Peace & Justice. The SACPJ assists students with Conflict Transformation, Anger Management, Coping Skills and Engagement strategies. This is long overdue. We need it desperately, and are grateful to have it. Wouldn't it be amazing if every single school in the state had an SACPJ? You can make this happen!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mr. Geno Ayala  
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